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INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS



A SERIES OF PUBLICA-TIONS RELATING TO THE AMERICAN ABORIGINES

VOL. IX, No. 1

NEW YORK

MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
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1920

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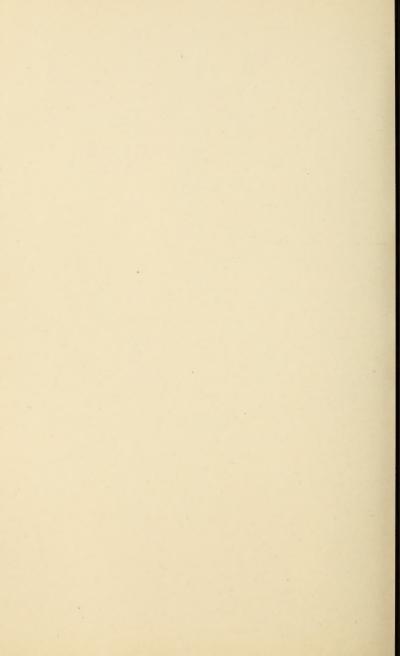


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THE EARLIEST NOTICES CONCERNING THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO BY CORTÉS IN 1519

BY

MARSHALL H. SAVILLE



THE EARLIEST NOTICES CON-CERNING THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO BY CORTÉS IN 1519

By Marshall H. Saville



N the 10th of February, 1519, Hernan Cortés set sail from Cuba for Yucatan and the coast of the present state of

Vera Cruz, Mexico, to follow up the discoveries of a new country made respectively in 1517 by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba¹ and in 1518 by Juan de Grijalva.² Cortés arrived at the island of San Juan Ulua on Thursday, April 21, 1519. Bernal Diaz, one of the companions of Cortés and a member of the two previous expeditions, wrote about the landing as follows:

"The next day, which was Good Friday, we disembarked with the horses and guns, on some sand hills, which rise to a considerable height, for there was no level land, nothing but sand dunes; and the artillery man Mesa placed the guns in position to the best of his judgment. Then we set up an altar, where mass was said, and we made huts and shelters for Cortés and the captains, and three hundred of the soldiers brought wood and made houses for themselves, and we placed the horses where they would be safe, and in this way Good Friday was passed." ³

In a few days Cortés received a great number of presents through the messengers and subject chiefs of Montezuma, among them being two great discs, more than six feet in diameter, one of gold and the other of silver.⁴

Within a short time Cortés sent Francisco de Montejo on an exploring expedition up the coast, and on his return he reported finding a better place for head-quarters, where there was a port sheltered from the north winds. Some time during May or June (the exact date has not been determined) the entire party removed to this region, and preparations were made to establish a permanent town. This was soon accomplished, and the settlement was given the name of Villa Rica

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de la Vera Cruz.⁵ It was close to the Indian town of Quiahuiztlan, which was called the port of Archidona.⁶ Not far distant was the important city of Cempoalla, the chief settlement of the region, occupied by Indians of the Totonacan stock. Cortés gave it the name of New Seville.⁷ The inhabitants of this part of the country were at that time under the subjection of Montezuma, and because of excesses of the Aztecan tributegatherers, they became willing allies of the Spaniards.

Cortés resolved to send to Spain a report of his discoveries, along with the presents he had received. He wrote a long letter, which has not come to light; the authorities of the new town also prepared an extended report, together with an inventory of the treasure, and Alonso Portocarrero and Francisco de Montejo were chosen to take charge of the ship in which were to go six Indians, to show the King what manner of people inhabited the new land. The little vessel left Mexico, July 16; a stop was made in

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Cuba, contrary to the definite orders of Cortés, and the ship finally arrived in Seville, November 5, 1519, nearly four months after the departure from Mexico. The arrival of the treasure ship immediately excited those who saw the wonderful objects and heard the reports of the cities with stone buildings, paved streets, and public squares. No doubt many letters were written by those who had remained behind in the new town, and those in Spain who talked with the sailors were not long in spreading the news. The object of this paper is to call attention to several letters of this character.

In 1866, Frederick Muller, the book-seller in Amsterdam, received in a purchase of books from a great Austrian library, a precious little manuscript, containing three letters written in German, relating to the conquest of Mexico in 1519 by Hernan Cortés. It consisted of two folio sheets folded into eight pages, probably taken from an old account book, and was wrapped in a page of ancient music, with a pasteboard cover. Two

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pages are blank, and the three letters are preceded by the general title, "News how the men of our most gracious Sovereign King of Rome and Spain have found a most costly new country," with the date 1520. The writing is cursive and difficult to read in certain parts, and dates certainly from the first part of the sixteenth century. In 1871 Muller published the manuscript under the title, "Trois Lettres sur la decouverte du Yucatan et les merveilles de ce pays. Ecrites par des compagnons de l'expedition sous Iean de Grivalia [sic], Mai 1518." The edition was limited to thirty numbered copies, printed on old paper. The original German text appears first, in Gothic characters cast in 1480, then follows a transcription in modern German in Elzevir type, finally a translation into French, printed in type from the Plantain press, cast in 1555. The original manuscript was offered for sale for 120 florins. in Muller's catalog issued in 1872. Here, in describing the item, he corrects the mistake made in the title of his publica-

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tion of the letters, in which he mentions them as relating to the expedition of Grijalva to Yucatan in 1518.9

These letters are highly important, and form source material of value concerning the early stages of the conquest of Mexico. The first letter was undoubtedly written in Spanish and sent by a servant to his master, by one who accompanied the expedition of Cortés from Cuba to the shores of the present state of Vera Cruz. The German translation at hand evidently omits personal matters, and gives only that which calls attention to the interesting discoveries made and the treasure obtained by Cortés. It was written in the city named New Seville by Cortés, "in the port of Archidoma [sic], the 28th of June, 1518." New Seville, as has been said, was the large Totonacan city of Cempoalla, and Archidona was a town not far distant, the Indian name of which was Ouiahuiztlan. According to Bernal Diaz this place was a fortresslike town on a plain, half a league from where the Spaniards established their

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first settlement in Mexico, to which they gave the name Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz. The ruins of Cempoalla still exist, and show the remains of one of the most interesting of ancient Mexican cities. The site is about sixteen miles from the coast. Cortés made the place his head-quarters, and thence set out on his memorable trip into the unknown interior to visit Montezuma in Tenochtitlan, his stronghold, in the valley of Mexico.

The date of the letter indicates that it was written a little more than two weeks before the ship which carried the treasure and the reports of the progress of the expedition was despatched to Spain. The inventory accompanying the treasure was signed on July 6, and the letter sent by the town council of the new town is dated July 10. The ship sailed, as recorded by Cortés, on July 16. This letter is one of the six extant accounts written by eyewitnesses of this early period of the conquest of Mexico. First, is the collection of letters by Cortés. 10 Next in order, and far more instructive,

is the History of the Conquest, by Bernal Diaz del Castillo.¹¹ Then we have the so-called Anonymous Conquerer. 12 These three sources have been known for a long time, and have been utilized by writers of the subject. In 1866, Icazbalceta published for the first time the fourth source from an eyewitness, the Relación of Captain Andrés de Tapia.13 The letter under consideration was printed in 1871, but the edition is so small that it can hardly be said to have been made known. The sixth account, entitled Historia de la Nueva España, was found by Paso y Troncoso in Spain in 1892, and was published in tomo VII of the Anales del Museo Nacional de México in 1900: it is by Francisco de Aguilar, and is quite important, although it adds little to what may be gathered from the writings of Cortés and Bernal Diaz.14 As first-hand information these accounts are in a class by themselves, and must be considered as distinct from the many histories relating to the events of this epoch which appeared later.

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The second letter published by Muller is a copy of one written in Seville, dated November 7, to be sent to Juan de la Pena in Burgos. From this letter, and the third one which bears the same date. we obtain the exact time of the arrival of the treasure ship in Seville, for both state that the vessel reached there two days before, hence, on November 5, 1519. This date is absolutely corroborated by the list found by Muñoz in the Manual del Tesorero of the Casa de Contratación of Seville, which states that the presents were received there on Saturday, November 5, 1519,15 evidence that such a rich treasure was not allowed to remain on the ship, but was delivered to the authorities for safekeeping the very day of arrival, as might be expected. writer of this second letter relates briefly what he gleaned from conversation with those who came on the caravel. speaks of Cempoalla (under the name of New Seville), and also mentions briefly some of the objects of gold and silver. We shall refer to this letter again.

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CONQUEST BY CORTÉS

The third letter is very short; it was written in Seville, November 5, by a servant named Diego Dienz, of one Diego Dicharo, to Gencato y Almacon in Burgos. Like the other two, it calls attention to the large cities discovered and the gold treasure found in New Spain, which they then called Yucatan.

Another letter of the same tenor. written in Spanish, was brought to light by Cesáreo Fernández Duro in 1885, and published by him as the First Notices of Yucatan. 16 This letter, which was found in the archives of the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, was reprinted in 1898, in the introduction to the first volume of the Relaciones de Yucatan, published in the Colección de Documentos de Ultramar. tomo XI.17 The editor thinks there is no doubt that this letter refers to the arrival of a vessel, either during the last months of the year 1518 or at the beginning of 1519, which brought the first news of the discovery of Yucatan. If this is true, the ship was the one which brought the news of the discoveries made

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in Yucatan and along the coast of Mexico in 1518 by Juan de Grijalva, and also the treasure obtained from the Indians at that time. A comparison of this letter published by Fernández Duro with the second Muller letter, shows such similarities that there can be no doubt that the German copy was a translation hastily made of one in Spanish similar to that published by Fernández Duro. The Spanish letter is addressed to the Archbishop of Granada, President of the Council, while the German one is addressed to Juan de la Pena in Burgos. There are slight minor differences to be noted, but the general details of the two letters are the same. These differences may be due to carelessness on the part of the German translator, who hastened to send the news of the great discovery to Austria. The truth seems to be that the same person wrote similar letters to at least two different individuals, one in Granada and the other in Burgos. It is indeed fortuitous that after the lapse of centuries both the German and the

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Spanish epistles should come to light at about the same time. That Fernández Duro was unaware of the publication of a German rendering of this information is not strange, when we consider the extremely small edition published by Muller. The context of the Spanish letter proves beyond doubt that it refers to the arrival of the vessel sent home by Cortés.

Two great discs, one of gold, the other of silver, likened by the early writers to wheels, were the most imposing of the gifts sent by Cortés. In the list of presents brought to Cuba by Grijalva in 1518, and sent to Spain by Governor Velasquez, which is preserved in the work of Gomara,18 no mention is made of objects of this description, neither is any reference thereto in the Itinerary of Grijalva, written by Juan Diaz, the chaplain of the fleet, nor in the work of Oviedo y Valdés, who has given us the most extended account of this expedition.19 These notable objects are described or mentioned in all four letters to

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which we have just referred. Both Peter Martyr 20 and Las Casas 21 saw them in Valladolid, where they had been sent for the inspection of the King, in April, 1520. Peter Martyr writes specifically that they were sent by Cortés. Furthermore, they are noted by all the evewitnesses of the conquest with the exception of Cortés. The gold disc is catalogued in the Inventory accompanying the specimens, drawn up in July, 1519, by Portocarrero and Montejo, who brought the treasure to Spain. We are at a loss to understand why the silver disc is not mentioned in the Inventory. A note that the presents were delivered to Valladolid for the inspection of the King during Holy Week, appears at the end of the list. Finally, we would call attention to the statement of Las Casas that these pieces, the large gold and silver discs, were sent to the coast of Mexico by Montezuma in 1518 to be given to Grijalva, but when they arrived there, Grijalva had already departed on his return to Cuba,22 a statement also found in Gomara.23

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The Spanish letter begins, as does the German one, with the announcement that the caravel arrived in Seville two days before, hence the date when it was written is certainly November 7, 1519. This date antedates by more than a year the publication in Basel, in 1521, of the account of the Grijalva expedition written by Peter Martyr,24 but the Itinerary of Grijalva, written by the chaplain of the fleet, Juan Diaz, appeared earlier and must be recognized as the first printed notice of Yucatan. It was issued from the press as an appendix to the Travels of Ludovico Varthema, on March 3, 1520.25 several months after the arrival of the treasure ship of Cortés, and a few weeks before these gifts were seen by the King.

On March 17 of the same year there appeared in Nuremberg a small tract of 12 pages by an anonymous author, which contains a notice of discoveries of Córdoba, Grijalva, and Cortés. Bancroft writes that it is a collection of extracts from several letters to Charles V, referring to Yucatan and forming an

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account of a recently discovered island, describing its locality, and the customs and habits of its inhabitants. On the first page is mentioned the voyage of Córdoba and the pilot Alaminos, made in 1517 to the peninsula of Yucatan. the reverse of the first leaf, in the second line begins an account of the voyage of Juan de Grijalva, stating that he sailed from the island (of Cuba) with three ships and one brigantine, with 360 men, and sailed to the land Iucatham and the island Chosumellam (Cozumel). The notice of this voyage is short, occupying this page (38 lines) and two-thirds of the next page. It then proceeds to relate some things about the expedition of Cortés.

There seems to be a mistake in the date of Córdoba's voyage, as the tract begins, "Als man zalt nach Christi gefurt tausendt funfshunderft und neunzehn Jar de sechste Julii 1st von der Inseln genant Fernandina auff dem meere gegē dem nidergang Eine der Inseln | so jetziger zeit die Hispanier Indias nennen | ein Schiffart der Spaniol mit zweiyē grossen

schiffen vund einem kleinerem | das man verganto nennet | under dem Hauptman Francisco von Cordoba. Schiffpatron | oder Anthonio de Alaminos, dz sie auss nacht parlichen Inseln ettlich einwoner zu knechtē hinfūrtē auss gangen," etc. The date of sailing should be 1517 instead of 1519. There is a copy of this rare tract in the New York Public Library. full title is, "Ein ausszug ettlicher sendbrief dem aller durchleüchtigisten grossmechtigiste Fursten vnd Herren Carl Romischen vnd Hyspanische König &c vnserm gnedigen hern durch ire verordent Hauptleut von wegen einer new gefunde Inseln, der selbe gelegenheit vnd inwoner sitten vn gewonneite inhaltend vor Kurtzuerschienen tagen zugesandt." phon, "Nürmberg: Frederich Pepyus, 17 tag Marij, MDXX." This tract was printed two weeks after the printing of the Itinerary of Juan Diaz in Venice.

Another early anonymous publication of the news of these discoveries has been described by Harrisse. It is noted in the Additions to his Bibliotheca Ameri-

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cana Vetustissima, published in Paris in 1872. As this seems to be the only copy known, we give *in extenso* what Harrisse writes about it. The title is, "Littera mādata della Insula de Cuba de India in laquale se cotiene de le isnule Citta Gente et animali nouamente trouate de lanno AD. XIX. p li Spagnoli." It is a quarto *sine loco*, with title one-leaf and seven unnumbered leaves of text printed in Roman characters. It is in the Marciana Library, Florence. Harrisse's description is:

"The present letter is an account of Grijalva's expedition to Yucatan. It differs materially from the description of Juan Diaz, as given in the version published at Venice by Mat. Pagan and Zorzi di Rusconi. It begins thus: 'A di primo, del mese de Magio de questo pñte anno 1519 [1518]. Lo Signore Iohāne de grisalua capitanio magiore co.200 santi & dui nauigli e vno brigantino se partimo de la insula chimata Cuba e infra tre sequeti giorni hauessimo scoperto terra'... and ends in this wise: 'E vn altro di trouão carauela co victuaglia che mandaua a nui lo signor Dego velasquez loco tenete dela isula de Cuba crededo che hauessimo populato in qualche loco e ne disseno che erano nella

ditta însula de cuba quatro altri nauigli p venire in nostro soccorso e così ne tornamo ala dita insula de cuba dove fossimo resceputi dali nostri no tropo volunuiera pche no haueuamo cominciato a popular i vna de questi insule o netteuano in ordine otto nauigli grossi p dar la volta co piu gente a popular in qlche bon loco credemo sera la nostra partita a principio del mese de Febraro del anno M.D. XX. Finis. V.S.'''

An important tract, of which but two copies are known, one in the New York Public Library, the other in the John Carter Brown Library, has been described by Harrisse in his Bibliotheca Americana Vetustissima (no. 101). It is "Anonymous—Within a border. Provinciae Sive Regiones In India Occidentali Noviter Reperta In Vltima Navigatione. Et Valleotti septima Martii. Millesimo Quingentesimo vigesimo.* Very small 4to, fourteen unnumbered leaves, including the title." Harrisse adds: "The present is an account of the Conquest of Cuba by Diego Velasquez, and

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^{*&}quot;Anglice: The provinces or regions in the West Indies recently discovered in the last navigation. Valladolid, March 7th, 1850 [1520]."

seems to be a translation into Latin of a Spanish narration as yet unknown." As pointed out by Mr Wilberforce Eames, who drew attention to this work, the tract refers to the discovery of Yucatan by Cordoba in 1517, and there are reasons for belief that it was printed in Cologne.

Another anonymous tract treating of these early discoveries in Mexico was printed in Augsburg, Germany, probably in 1522. It is entitled, "Newe Zeitung von dem Lande das die Sponier funden haben ym 1521, iare genant Iucatan." It bears no date, and but two copies are known, one in the "Royal" Library in Berlin, the other in the City Library of Augsburg. The Berlin copy consists of four leaves: on the first page is the title and an illustration; on the second page text; third page text and a repetition of the illustration on the first page; fourth page text; fifth page text and an illustration; sixth page text; seventh page text and a repetition of the engraving on the fifth page; eighth page text.

According to Harrisse, who has described the Augsburg example, the Berlin copy lacks the last two leaves. He states that the copy in Augsburg has title one-leaf, and five unnumbered leaves. The illustration in the Augsburg copy on the fifth and seventh pages represents a town and an island with the inscription, "Gross Venedig," referring evidently to Tenochtitlan (City of Mexico), which was situated on an island in a lake intersected by many canals. A facsimile of the Berlin example was printed in an edition of one hundred copies in 1873.

An exceedingly rare tract of this character, a copy of which is in the NewYork Public Library, is "Ein schone Newe zeytung so Kayserlich Mayestet auss India yetz nemlich zukommen seind. Gar hupsch vo den Newen ynseln, ynd von yrem sytten Kurtweylig zu leesen." (n.p., n.d.) Harrisse states that it contains "an abridged account of the voyage of Columbus, and of the conquest of Mexico down to the year 1522, [and] was printed, it is supposed, at Augsburg

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by Sigmund Grimm, about 1522." He gives in B.A.V., no. 115, a reproduction of the engraved title-page.

The peninsula of Yucatan was discovered in 1517 by Francisco Hernandez de Córdoba, of which the only account by an eyewitness is that of Bernal Diaz. Grijalva was sent out the next year to follow up this discovery, and his expedition coasted along the Mexican shores as far north as Tuxpan. Cortés conquered the country, and added this immense territory to the realms of the sovereigns of Spain.

Here follow translations of these four interesting documents:

FIRST GERMAN LETTER

"News how the men of our most gracious Sovereign King of Rome and Spain have found a most costly new country.

"1520.

"The following is the copy of a letter written by a servant to his master from the new found land called Yucatan.26

"In the said letter there is contained much that does not belong here; here follows only the useful.

"The said servant was in the Indies or the island of Cuba, from which he sailed with three ships to discover new lands. These three ships 27 were sent by Doctor Velasquez, Governor of His Royal Majesty in the land of Cuba, and they have found a great new people. The writer of this letter traveled in the company of a knight named Fernando Cortés, who should travel with the new tidings to the said Doctor Velasquez, Governor of the island of Cuba. Therefore they have traveled united to our Master and King, bringing him the grand and wonderful presents which were given by the peoples of the said lands.

"From the new tidings from the land named Yucatan which we have discovered, E. G. should know that it is the richest land in the world where were found the following things. It has so much gold innumerable or without comparison, and has much silver and precious

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stones, namely, turquoise, garnets, rubies, and many other necessary things according to people who knew it. There are many clothes of cotton richly worked with figures sewed with a needle. One can hardly tell what wonderful things one finds in their houses; their bedsteads are covered with canopies and other costly cloths. The people of this land are honest, and have extraordinarily beautiful women. One cannot estimate the value of the houses of the great lords, neither are they comparable with those in our land, because it is a great sight to see the buildings of these countries, the large halls, the entrances to the doors, the courtvards, are built with much marble and are decorated; all buildings are painted in various colors. They have many dwellings so that the king with all his retinue may live comfortably therein. It is hard to tell what curious things one finds; their gardens are decorated with trees, with tables for banquets wonderfully wrought. The cities are larger than Seville: more than half of them have five

miles of roads in length and breadth, wonderously beautiful, with splendid streets all of them beautifully paved: all buildings are plastered inside with teraltza, as white and pure as paper. I could relate to E. G. almost 600,000 of these extraordinary things. I let E. G. know that the first time we went on land we spent 15 days in the great city. There they brought us so many pieces of worked gold that it is neither to believe nor to relate. It has been related to E. G. without doubt of the valuable trinkets of gold and precious stones which they carried with them to donate to the Roman Royal Majesty, and as it might occur that E. G. does not get a chance to see these trinkets. I will herein describe a few of these pieces which are being sent on these ships to His Royal Majesty.

"Two round discs, one of fine gold, the other of fine silver, finely worked with beautiful figures out of free hand, which were given to the Captain. The gold disc is 7 palms broad, and 7 palms long; the other of silver is the little finger smaller.

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"Further; a head of a great snake or dragon, that is a figure of very fine gold, with gold teeth; this is a full palm broad, and three fingers thick; note how large this head is. The eyes are of costly precious stones, and decorated with very costly feathers.²⁸

"Further; a great disc of precious stones, which is on the inside and outside lined with a tiger-skin, which skins are very highly valued.

"Further; four necklaces with many costly stones mounted in gold.

"Further; a horn of a sea-fish made of gold, 2 palms long, and about 2 palms broad, entirely of gold.

"Further; a head of gold, and many other pieces of gold, silver, and precious stones. I know nothing more to communicate to E. G. from here but that it is the best country of all things in this world. Written in the city named New Seville, in the port of Archidoma, 29 the 28th of June, 1519.

"Furthermore, there is contained in said letter: the natives are of fairly good

conservation and beautiful of body and face; very wealthy; they are circumcised; they worship idols, and eat only pur[?] bread; they have no other bread. There are here a great many bees, sekt(?), lots of wax, and big peaches. It is believed that these natives have peopled the land originally when Rome was destroyed. It is a very friendly people, and they have (manifested) great joy that they have seen Christians, and they themselves have brought the Christians among their people, and shown them the land. Our Captain has honored their King greatly by presents which they have valued very highly. Of these 3 ships which Diego Velasquez sent to discover this land, he has sent over only one, the others remain in the land with about 50 men.30 They have built fortresses and castles.31 The presents sent to our Lord and King are valued at 15,000 Castile. It is all subtle and beautiful: it is not known whether the land is a mainland or not. This land has a lot of spice which has the shape of nails [cloves]."

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SECOND GERMAN LETTER

"Here follows the copy of a letter from Seville, November 7, written to Juan de la Pena in Burgos.

"Two days ago a caravel arrived of 70 to 80 tons burden, from a new country called Yucatan: it brought 50 Indians 32 from the said land called Yucatan, and they say that in their country about 15 or 20 years ago, 8 Castilian men from this city of Seville were married there, and that they are said to be very rich. These men arrived at said time through loss in a storm of a caravel, which had gone out on discoveries: that is why the caravel arrived, and these 8 men were saved.33 It is a country with many cities surrounded by walls like our city. And the first city in which these Castilians or Spaniards live is said to contain 500 men, and is situated at the entrance of a port on the sea.34 Our Christians have a separate dwelling on the outskirts of the city, about an arquebus shot away, and they are almost united with the other

and trade daily with those of the city. They have gone with a little boat 14 miles 35 from said port inland, and have found a city of 14,000 inhabitants or men, and have given the city the name of Seville the new one, or New Seville.36 is said to have strong walls and very beautiful towers, beautiful palaces and market places: there is also said to be a great deal of commerce with the tradesmen. It is also said that higher up. about 4 miles 37 above said port or waters. there is a still larger city; and they are said to have been there 10 days, and (this city) is said to have 1000 inhabitants.38 This I say according to what I have heard from others who have been there. Now I will tell also what I have seen.

"First, a bread (loaf) of gold bigger than a wagon wheel, and in it there are fashioned, just as one makes little objects out of tin, some wild animals, and in the center is the figure of a squatting woman,³⁹ called Dercemj [zemi],⁴⁰ that means the devil. This, Pedro Garcia de

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Careon should understand very well. It is wrought very well with many figures all around, and the bread, or wheel, weighs fully 150 marks of gold of the fineness of 20 carat gold. Further, (they) bring a wheel of fine silver, perhaps bigger even than the abovementioned, and it has a figure analogous to the one above said. The figure is a man and the other in the golden wheel a woman; then there is still another wheel or disc with 5 round gold discs, beautifully wrought, and very hard and firm, with feathers or feather tufts, exceedingly subtle and beautifully adorned. Further, 8 boxes in which there are different and curious things of gold, of which much could be written, but it is such a great quantity of gold that one can estimate it as 25,000 pesos of gold.

"Further, one has given there for a piece of crystal, which is here worth 2 maravedis, 500 pesos, and the Indians desire it very much. They tell of the most marvelous things that have ever been heard of. It is impossible to write

about (them). And how they finally got at them? I could not learn; later I will be able to write you about all of it in detail, that E. G. will learn of the great miracles and signs of God, that one has found so many things.

"They further say, that the Lord of their land is more attended to than the Emperor, in great state and triumph; he has 10 porters before one arrives where the King is, and in the kitchen where his meals are prepared there are 20 women." 41

THIRD GERMAN LETTER

"Follows copy of a letter from Seville, November 7, written by Diego Dicharo's servant, whose name is Diego Dienz, to Gencato y Almacon in Burgos.

"I give E. G. to know that two days ago a caravel has arrived here which comes from a country called Yucatan; this, Diego Velasquez of Cuba has sent to discover, and they bring great news, that is, that they have found the richest land that may exist; that they have found therein cities of 20,000 homes, and

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especially one in which there are said to be 50,000 fires or inhabitants. And the houses are of stone, and the land is very beautiful, and rich in grazing, mountains and game like in our countries; also exceedingly fertile, especially in gold. And they bring outside of many pieces, two big wheels, one of gold, weighing 30,000 of Castile; one of silver weighing 50 marks; the piece is as big as a millstone.42 It is to be understood that if there are so many such things which one must consider as being the truth, that the peoples of this land have great abundance of gold and silver. Their little vessels and utensils which are used in the houses (are) all of gold and silver, and they give them away for little. These (reports) are great news."

SPANISH LETTER

"The news which has come from Seville of all that was brought by a caravel that came from Tierra Firme, which was sent to the Lord Archbishop of Granada, President of the Council.43

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"Two days ago there arrived here a caravel of LXXX tons, which came from this new land which they call Hiucata [Yucatan]. It brought in it six Indians from this same land. They say that there are there (for the past) fifteen or twenty years, eight Castilians of Seville and of the country, and these men are from a caravel which was lost, which went to that land, from which (caravel) these escaped, and they are there, married and rich.

'It is a land where there are towns walled like those here, and also cities, and in the first city, where the Spaniards live, they say there are five hundred men there, of four hundred inhabitants, 44 and it is at the mouth of a river which is close to the sea, and the Spaniards who are there have made another settlement outside of the city, a cross-bow shot away, and they are there very friendly, and trade one with the other.

"Fourteen leagues above the place where the boat of this caravel went, they found a city of XIIIJ U [14,000] inhabi-

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tants; they gave it the name New Seville, and say that there are there towers, and walls in it, and with very beautiful houses and a town house, and all that there is found in Seville, and plazas and markets, and much traffic, and they say that XL leagues above, there is another city larger than the one they say, which might have IX U [9000] inhabitants; this is by hearsay, for they did not go there. Now I wish to speak about what the caravel brought, which I saw with my own eyes.

"First, a mass of gold as wide as a cart-wheel; I say that it is worked, as when they work over pitch, a great plate of silver; there are in it several large beasts; it has a mass in the center, with the figure of a seated woman, which is, one might say, the devil, and it is very well made, and (there are) many other pictures round about it, and this gold wheel weighs fully one hundred and fifty marks of gold of more than twenty carats.

"There is furthermore another wheel of the same size, which is of fine silver, and it has some figures, similar to the

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other, in the center, and this figure is a male, and that of the gold one, a female; and a round shield, with five plates of gold, and worked out in an exquisite manner, and a feather-piece worked par excellence, and eight chests filled with divers things, which it would take too long to recount, in which there are head armor of gold, and mortars of gold, and bows and arrows of gold, and such a quantity of gold that they say there is more than twenty five pesos of gold, only in these things, and all of this they say, was shown (to them) by the principal Indians, and from them was bartered. For a crystal that is worth two maravedis, they [the Indians] gave five hundred pesos of gold, and in this manner all other things (in) proportion. They speak of so many marvels that one cannot write (about them).

"They say that the Lord of all this land is served better than an Emperor, with more triumph [state]; that he has ten gate-keepers before one reaches where he is, and in the kitchen where the food

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is prepared, they say there are easily two hundred women, so well kept is the house."

NOTES

- I. A study of documentary material regarding the motives underlying the despatch of the expedition under the command of Córdoba, and the question of the landfall, has been recently published by the writer, "The Discovery of Yucatan in 1517 by Francisco Hernandez de Córdoba," in *The Geographical Review*, New York, vol. VI, no. 5, November, 1918.
- 2. The "Itinerary" of Juan de Grijalva, written by the chaplain of the fleet, was published in Italian by Ludovico de Varthema in his work entitled "Itinerario de Ludouico Varthema Bolognese ne lo Egypto ne la Suria ne la Arabia deserta & Felice ne la Persia: ne la India: & ne la Ethiopia. La fede el uiuiere & costūi de le pfate puīcie. Et al psente agiōtoui alcūe isole nouamēte ritrouate. [Wood-cut.] [Colophon:] ¶ Impresso in Venetia per Zorzi di Rusconi Milanese. Nellanno della Incarnatione del nostro Signore Ieso Christo. M.D. XX. adi III. de Marzo. Regnando lo inclito Principe Duca de Venetia. ABCDEFGHIKLMN Tutti sono Quaderni." 103 unnumbered leaves. On 85b begins: "¶ Itinerario de larmata del Re Catholico in India verso la Isola de Iuchathan del anno. M. D. XVIII. alla qual su presidete & Capitan General Ioan de Grisalua elqual e facto

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per El Capellano maggior de dicta armata a sua alteza." It was translated into French by Ternaux-Compans, and published in vol. x of his Voyages, Relations et Mémoires Originaux pour Servir a l'Histoire de l'Amérique, Paris, 1838. A translation into Spanish was published by Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta in his Colección de Documentos para la Historia de México, tomo. I, pp. 281–308, with parallel Italian text. This has been translated into English by the writer and will appear as vol. III of the Publications of the Cortes Society.

- 3. The edition of Bernal Diaz del Castillo consulted is the translation made by Alfred P. Maudslay, published by the Hakluyt Society in five volumes, the 2d Series, vols. 23–25, 30, and 40, London, 1908–16. See vol. I, book iii, chap. xxxviii, p. 137.
- 4. An extended study of these objects, based on documentary material, has been made by the writer in his work, "The Goldsmith's Art in Ancient Mexico," to be published in this series.
- 5. On this subject consult the work of Bernal Diaz, op. cit.
- 6. A document entitled "Escriptura convenida entre Hernando Cortés é el regimiento de la Villa-Rica en la Vera Cruz, sobre defensa de sus habitantes y derechos que habia de recaudar. Agosto 5 de 1519," published in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos del Archivo de Indias*, tomo xxvi, Madrid, 1876, begins as follows: "En el

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pueblo de Campual [Cempoalla], que agora es nombrado Sevilla, termino é xurisdiccion de la Villa-Rica de la Vera Cruz del Puerto de Archidona." In the same volume of the Colección is another document, "Presentaciones é Xuramentos de los testigos que presentó la parte del Marques del Valle para en prueba de sus descargos. Abril de 1534," in which is the following: "Lo que sabo de la dicha pregunta, es que dende á pocos dias queste testigo llegó en la dicha villa de la Vera Cruz, primeramente poblada, el dicho Don Hernando Cortés se aposentó en un pueblo alto ques cerca de la dicha villa, que los Indios llaman Quiabstlan [Quiahuiztlan] e los españoles por estar alto posieron Archidona."

7. The ruins of the city of Cempoalla remained in obscurity from the time of its fall and decay during the latter part of the sixteenth century, until 1883, when Herman Strebel published in Hamburg an account of the ruins, with plans of some of the structures. It does not appear that Strebel had visited the ruins at that time, but derived his information from others. In 1801. a commission under the leadership of Francisco del Paso y Troncoso made a survey of the ruins. and in 1912 a report of the results of the expedition, edited by Jesus Galindo v Villa, "Las Ruinas de Cempoala," was published in the Anales del Museo Nacional de México, New Series, tomo III. In 1905, Dr J. Walter Fewkes visited the region and has published an important

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study of the subject, "Certain Antiquities of Eastern Mexico," in the 25th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, for 1903-04, Washington, 1907. The writer spent two days at the ruins in January 1898, and made a survey and plan of one of the temples.

- 8. A translation of this Inventory will be found in the writer's work, "The Goldsmith's Art in Ancient Mexico," op. cit.
- Q. The copy of this rare work in the library of the writer seems to be a printer's first issue of the Letters. It lacks the first viii pages comprising the title-page and introduction, has an extra line of type to the page, and the French rendering is different in a number of cases. The paper is also larger and the sheets uncut. While the present study of these letters was in type, we obtained a copy of the regular edition, formerly in the Medlicott library. In it was a folded sheet containing two columns of galley proof of an article entitled "Conquest of Mexico," being a review of the Trois Lettres, signed with the initials "C. H. B." No date or place of publication is given, but we have traced it to the American Bibliopolist, vol. 4, nos. 43 and 44, published by Joseph Sabin and Sons, New York, 1872. There can be no doubt that it was written by the well-known Mexicanist, Carl Hermann Berendt, as he was in the United States during the years 1872-73, and published a number of papers at that time. As this review is important, we reprint it in extenso.

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"CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

"Our bibliophiles may perhaps have noticed in the Catalogue of Books, Maps, Plates on America. etc., published by Fr. Muller, Amsterdam, (See our May number, p. 252) under No. 1144, the description of a German manuscript, of the year 1520, containing copies of three letters, relating to the 'new found land Yucatan.' From this manuscript, Mr. Muller has issued an edition of 30 copies, printed by Enschede (Harlem), on old paper, with real old gothic characters from the 15th century, together with a version into modern German, printed with Elzevirian types. and another, modern French, printed with characters de civilité, both from the 16th century. A copy of this curious and beautiful plaquette has just reached us. It is a small 8vo, with the title: Trois Lettres sur la Découverte du Yucatan. et les Merveilles de ce Pavs. Ecrites par des compagnons de l'expédition sous Jean de Grivalja (sic) May, 1518; viii and 35 pages; on the last, unnumbered, printers escutcheon, name, year, etc. We note at once some slight mistakes on the title page. These letters do not refer to the expedition of Grijalva (not Grivalja) to Yucatan. but to Cortes, landing on the Culhuan (Mexican) coast at the actual site of the city of Vera Cruz. and the letters are not written by companions of either, but one by a companion of Cortes, and the two others by persons in Spain. The countries, discovered and conquered by Cortes,

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were for years called Yucatan, until the name New-Spain had been introduced and g nerally accepted. So was the title of the dominican friar Julian Garces, the first bishop appointed for Mexico, until the year 1526, 'Bishop of Yucatan.' It seems to be in consequence of a similar mistake that we find Hernando de Grijalva's expedition to the Northwest, which sailed from the Yucatan port, called the 'Bay of Santiago de Buena Esperanza,' (either the port Huatulco or La Ventosa, in the State of Oaxaca), recorded in a monograph of works on Central America.

"The first letter, written by one of the companions of Cortes, is given in extract only, and that seems to have been translated from the Spanish. It bears the date 'New Sevilla.' (the name given by the Spaniards to the Totonaco-town Cempoallan) in the port 'die Archidoma,' on the 28th of June, 1519. was about a week before the appointment of the municipality of the 'Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz.' Cortes' first (lost) Carta de Relacion, and the letter of the new Ayuntamiento, were written on the 6th of July, and Francisco de Montejo, who was sent to Spain with them and with the first presents received from Montezuma, must have taken with him among the letters, 'written by officers and soldiers,' this one to the mother country. He sailed the 20th of July, and arrived in San Lucar in October of

the same year. The other two letters, dated Sevilla (52 miles from San Lucar), on the 7th of November (no year is given, but evidently the same year, 1519), give reports of the arrival of the news and treasure from the new discovered countries to some parties in Burgos. translator of the original into modern German and French, seems not to have been sufficiently versed either in the history of Cortes' expedition. or in the ancient German language. Interposing a fancied punctuation, he turns the expedition. sent by Velasquez, Governor in Cuba, into one sent by Governor Velasquez to Cuba. He ought to have guessed that the tingrishaut which gave him much trouble, as indicated by an interrogation within brackets, might be read tiegrishaut (tiger-fell), the German written e, being very similar to the n.

"There are some discrepancies in the report, of which one at least is not easily explained. The writer mentions repeatedly that the expedition consisted of three ships, while we know that their number was eleven, a fact which scarcely could be ignored by a member of the expedition. It is also here asserted that the news were to be sent to Velasquez, and that the writer had been destined to go with the bearer, while it is known that Montejo had strict orders not to land in Cuba, but to proceed directly to Spain. But it seems by no means impossible that such rumor had been spread purposely, in order to deceive

the friends of Velasquez among the expeditionists, and that the writer was not aware of Montejo's real instructions. The description of the presents, to be forwarded to Spain, enters into some details which we do not remember to have seen given by the contemporanean writers. The evident exaggeration is fully in accordance with the boasting character of a Spanish adventurer and conqueror. Discrepancies in the two other letters are of less weight; so the item that Montejo brought 50 Indians with him (in a ship of 70 to 80 tons); the weight of the gold-wheel given at 30,000 Castellanos (300 Spanish pounds, while it weighed only 20). They do not affect the credibility so much, as the writers gave their information, probably, on hear-say.

"Altogether, we consider this print not only of value as a typographical curiosity, but also of some historical importance; not to speak of the high estimation it will meet for existing in a number of thirty copies. C[arl]. H[ermann]. B[erendt]."

10. The letters of Cortés to the King were printed soon after their receipt in Spain. As has been already stated, the *first letter* sent from the coast has not been found; the *second letter* was written from a newly founded town, not far from the present city of Puebla, named Seguara de la Frontera; it is dated October 30, 1520, and was printed by Juan Cromberger in Seville, November 8, 1522. The *third letter* was written in Coyoacán,

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near the City of Mexico, on May 15, 1522. It was also printed by Cromberger in Seville, March 30, 1523. The fourth letter was written in Tencochtitlan (now the City of Mexico), October 15, 1524, and was printed in Toledo, October 20, 1525. We use the translation of Francis A. MacNutt, "The Letters of Cortés to Charles V," two volumes, New York, 1908.

- II. The first issue of the work of Bernal Diaz was in 1632. We use the edition of the Hakluyt Society, op. cit.
- 12. The short but valuable account of the Anonymous Conqueror appeared in Italian in the Collection of Ramusio in 1556. A translation into French was published by Ternaux-Compans in tome x of his "Recueil de Pièces relatives à la Conquête du Mexique," of Voyages, Relations et Mémoires Originaux pour servir a l'Histoire de la Découverte de l'Amérique, Paris, 1837-41. A translation into Spanish was published Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta, in Colección de Documentos para la Historia de México, tomo I. Mexico, 1858. The writer has made an English translation which appears as vol. I of Documents and Narratives Concerning the Discovery and Conquest of Latin America, published by the Cortes Society in 1917.
- 13. The important account of the conquest of Mexico by Captain Andres de Tapia was published for the first time by Icazbalceta in his Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de Méx., tomo II, Mexico,

1866. An English translation has been made by Randolph M. Saville and will appear as vol. v of the Publications of the Cortes Society.

14. The account of Francisco de Aguilar was not written until the author was an old man, and then at the importunities of some of his fellow priests. It was sent to the Archbishop of Mexico in 1570. Diego Duran obtained much information from Aguilar when writing his Historia de las Indias de Nueva España, and placed more weight on his testimony than that of the Indians and their paintings from whom he derived the greater part of the material for his history. writes of him, "fray Francisco de Aguilar persona muy benerable y de mucha autoridad en la órden del padre glorioso Santo Domingo." (Hist. de las Ind. de N. E., t. 2, cap. lxxx, p. 82, Mexico, 1880.) What may be an account of this epoch was exhibited at the Columbian Historical Exposition at Madrid in 1892. It is a letter of Francisco de Montejo describing the country in the vicinity of Vera Cruz, and is from the Archives of the Indies in Seville. We do not know that it has been published.

15. See Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, published by Navarrete, tomo I, Madrid, 1842.

16. "Primeras Noticias de Yucatan," by Cesareo Fernández Duro, in *Boletin de la Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid*, tomo XIX, Segundo Semestre de 1880, pp. 336–342, Madrid, 1885.

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- 17. Introduction, pp. xxxv-xxxviii.
- 18. Francisco Lopez de Gomara, "Conquista de Mexico, Segunda Parte de la Crónica de las Indias," edition of Vedia, "Historiadores Primitivos de Indias," reprinted by Rivadeneyra in *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, tomo, I, pp. 298–299, Madrid, 1852.
- 19. G. F. de Oviedo y Valdés, "Historia General y Natural de la Indias," edition of the Real Academia de la Historia, tomo I, primera parte, lib. xvii, caps. viii–xviii, pp. 502–537, Madrid, 1851. These chapters have been translated into English and will be printed by the Cortes Society in the volume devoted to the expedition of Grijalva in 1518.
- 20. Peter Martyr, edition of Francis A. Mac-Nutt, vol. II, Fifth Decade, p. 106, New York, 1912. This is an English translation from the Latin of "De Orbe Novo."
- 21. Bartolomeo de Las Casas, "Historia de las Indias," edition of Fuensanta del Valle and Rayon, published in five volumes in Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, tomo IV, p. 486, Madrid, 1876.
 - 22. Las Casas, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 436.
 - 23. Gomara, op. cit., p. 313.
- 24. Peter Martyr, "De Nvper Sub D. Carolo Repertis Insulis, simulat q'incolarum moribus R. Petri Martyris, Enchiridion Dominae Margaritae, Diui, Max. Caes. Filiae Dictatum," Basiliae, 1521.

25. See Note 2.

26. In these early days of the discovery of Mexico, the name Yucatan was applied indiscriminately to the entire coast and lands of the Gulf of Mexico as far as Vera Cruz. The title of the first printed letter (the second letter), published early in November, 1522, contains the statement of "innumerable lands and provinces newly discovered in Yucatan, especially the very large and rich province called Culua." Culua was the name of the region in which Montezuma held sway. The information contained in this and the following letters shows conclusively that the land of the present state of Vera Cruz was described.

27. This is inaccurate. The so-called first letter sent by the Municipality of the newly founded colony, under date of July 10, 1519, says, "Hernán Cortés sailed upon his voyage from the island of Fernandina [Cuba], having ten caravels and four hundred men of arms." In a recently discovered "memorial" sent by Martín Cortés, father of the conqueror, to the Royal Council, probably in March, 1520, in the name of his son to solicit the favor of the Court and to counteract the adverse influence of Diego Velasquez and others unfriendly to him, a brief statement is made regarding the expedition. It relates that Cortés went out from Cuba. "with seven caravels of his own, and three of the said Diego Velasquez, with four hundred men, to

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barter at the island and land of Coluacán and other parts." (Published by P. Mariano Cuevas, "Cartas y otros Documentos Novisimamente Descubiertos en el Archivo General de Indias en la Ciudad de Sevilla," Sevilla, 1915.) Portocarrero, one of the two proctors sent by Cortés with the loot to Spain, in a "declaration" made in the city of Coruña, dated April 29, 1520, states that he had heard "that of the ten ships that went out in the fleet, three were those of Diego Velasquez, and the seven belonged to Cortés and his friends." (Doc. Inéd. para la Hist. de España, t. I, p. 491, Madrid, 1842.) Oviedo v Valdés (op. cit., t. I, lib. XVII, cap. xix, pp. 539-540) writes that Cortés went to New Spain "with seven ships and three brigs which Diego Velasquez had given him." Bernal Diaz (op. cit., t. I, cap. xxv, p. 90) asserts, "There were eleven ships in all," in which statement he is followed by Herrera. Peter Martyr mentions the three brigs, but writes that in addition there were "ten caravels with five hundred men." The statement in the German letter of the three ships sent out by Velasquez, in which the said servant sailed, corresponds to the "memorial" of Martín Cortés, and the statement of Portocarrero so far as the ships owned by the Governor are concerned. The failure to mention the seven ships furnished by the conqueror seems to be in line with the tactics of Cortés' enemies to deliberately discredit him in Spain, and it is

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highly probable that his letter sent to the King at that time, the missing first letter, was purposely suppressed and perhaps destroyed.

28. This probably describes one of the so-called helmets or masks, of which three examples are now in the British Museum and several are in Rome and Florence. Consult Maudslay's appendix to the work of Bernal Diaz, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 299-302.

29. The spelling here, "Archidoma," is wrong; it should be *Archidona*.

30. This statement of fifty men remaining in Mexico is manifestly an error. The number was nearer five hundred. Bernal Diaz writes about a muster of his forces held by Cortés on the island of Cozumel, off the coast of Yucatan, and states that they "numbered five hundred and eight soldiers, not counting the shipmasters, pilots. and sailors, who numbered about one hundred." Op. cit., vol. I, p. 92.

31. This refers to the building of the first settlement made by the Spaniards in New Spain, the town of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz. Later the town was removed to the south, halfway to the place where they first landed, near the village called Antigua on the present line of the Interoceanic Railroad. It was again later removed to the southeast to the present site, opposite the island of San Juan de Ulua, the place of the landfall on the coast, now the port of Vera Cruz.

32. The statement that fifty Indians were

brought to Spain at this time is an error. Six Indians were sent to show the King the kind of people found in the new country.

33: At the time of the voyage of Grijalva the Spaniards heard rumors of some white men living in Yucatan. Cortés was charged to make a search for them, and bring them to Cuba. this voyage they learned that two were living. One, Gonzalo Guerrero, refused to leave his new home, for he had taken a wife, had children. and occupied a position of importance among the natives. The other, Gerónimo de Aguilar, was found. He joined the expedition and became a valued assistant to Cortés. Having acquired the Maya language, he was able to act as interpreter. Later, when the Indian girl Marina was taken, the chain was complete, for she not only understood the Mava language, but the Mexican or Nahuatl, which was her mother tongue.

34. This probably refers to the town of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz.

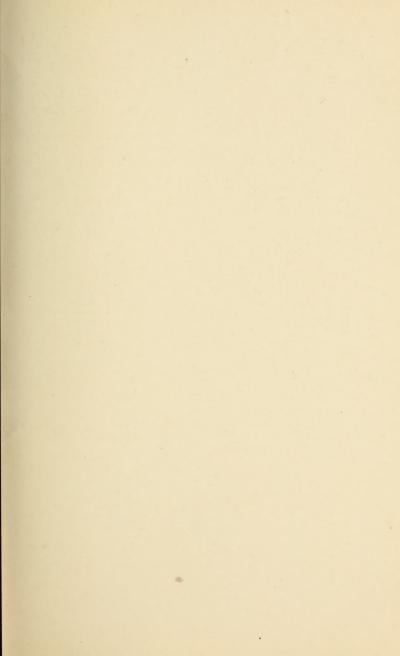
35. This statement seems to be inaccurate, for the Spaniards probably went on foot to this town. It is possible, however, that a few went on a first trip up river in a canoe.

36. The Totonacan town of Cempoalla is here referred to.

37. This assertion of a town only four miles from the port (Archidona) being larger than New Seville, or Cempoalla, is inaccurate.

- 38. Here again the statement of a larger town than New Seville (which is said to have had 14,000 inhabitants), and having 1000 inhabitants, shows confusion and haste in preparing the letter.
- 39. The statement that the figure in the center of the large gold disc represented a squatting woman is interesting. Peter Martyr writes that the figure resembled a king seated on his throne. These are the only statements regarding the character of the central figure of this wonderful piece, which undoubtedly represented in its entirety the Mexican calendar wheel.
- 40. The word *Dercemj* (Der *cemj*) is a corruption of the Antillean word *zemi* or *zeme*, the name for an idol.
- 41. In the Spanish letter the number is given as 200, which is probably correct.
- 42. Peter Martyr is the only other contemporary writer who compares this great gold disc to a millstone.
- 43. According to Fernández Duro, the Archbishop of Granada at this time, who was President of the Council of the Indies, was Don Antonio de Rojas.
- 44. This statement is very obscure. We have translated literally the text as it appears in the original Spanish.

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